

Budget Deficit Reduction Act- February 2, 2006

M. Speaker,

We have heard a great deal from the Republican Leadership recently about its commitment to reforming the way it does business.

Today, Republicans have again told us that they have learned from their mistakes, and will never again allow special interests to distract them from doing the work of the American people.

But actions speak louder than words.

And this budget bill before us today is proof that despite all the talk of reform, nothing has changed with this leadership.

This is a bill that is titled the "Deficit Reduction Act..."

...even though it will do nothing to reduce our ballooning national deficit.

This is a bill that cuts health insurance for poor children by 6.9 billion dollars...

...at a time when the President is talking about increasing health coverage.

This is a bill that cuts student loans by 12.7 billion dollars...

...at a time when higher education is needed to keep America competitive in the global economy.

This is a bill that cuts Medicare spending by 6.4 billion dollars...

....that cuts child support enforcement by 1.5 billion dollars...

...and that cuts 343 million dollars from foster care programs.

Last year, we knew what was behind this bill: tax cuts for the rich.

In order to offset the Administration's unprecedented give-away to the country's richest citizens,

Republicans were willing to cut services to the neediest of Americans.

Such an indefensible set of priorities is still the major reason why the Majority has given us this bill again today.

But this year, things are even worse.

We are being asked to vote on a bill that, more than ever before, proves that the Culture of Corruption is alive and well in the Republican Congress.

At the behest of the drug and managed care industries,

who met with key legislators in closed, back-door sessions,

Republican conferees have changed this legislation so that it will save these industries a total of 42 billion dollars.

And how do they suggest we pay for this new and improved giveaway to the corporate lobby?

By increasing co-payments and reducing health coverage for children, seniors, and people with disabilities who rely upon Medicaid.

This last year showed us the terrible consequences of poor leadership.

We saw a natural disaster turn into a national tragedy because of a failed government response.

We saw self-interest run amok, as top lawmakers violated the people's trust,

and were indicted and forced to step down in the wake of scandal.

We saw our troops and the people of Iraq struggle heroically to lift not just the weight of a vicious insurgency,

but also the burden of poor planning and unfulfilled promises from the White House.

And here again today, Republicans are acting to make the American people victims of unscrupulous, disingenuous leadership...

...all while they talk of reform and change.

We simply cannot afford another year like the last one.

Every Member of this body needs to know the serious consequences of their vote today...

A vote for this bill is a vote to literally take away healthcare from our children so that we can give more money to the

super-rich.

A vote for this bill is a vote to weaken Medicare for our struggling seniors,

...and put a college education further out of the reach of our students ---

---- Just so that we can fund more tax-giveaways to multi-millionaires.

A vote for this bill is a vote of support for the rampant Culture of Corruption that is destroying this institution.

Together, America can, and must, do better than what this budget reconciliation and this Majority Party is offering us here today.

I urge all of my colleagues to vote "no" on this bill, and to vote "yes" on a new day here in Washington.